and regulatory issues led TRAI to recommend the implementation of Unified Licensing regime in two stages.

CELL phone connections

212. SHRI DINA NATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cell phone connections in the country as on the 31st October, 2003;

(b) the number of land line telephone connections in the country as on the 31st October, 2003; and

(c) how does these numbers compare with cell and land line connections as on the 31st October, 1998?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN) : (a) to (c) Sir, as intimated by the Cellular Operators Association of India on behalf of the Cellular Operators, the number of subscribers of Cellular Mobile Telephone Service in the Country as on 31st October, 1998 and 31st October, 2003 were 9,84,352 and 1,93,46,303 respectively.

The number of land line telephone connections including Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) connections in the Country as on 31st October, 1998 and 31st October, 2003 were, 1,88,99,048 and 4,73,35,078 respectively.

Rural Telephone Exchange in West Bengal

213. SHRI Sk. KHABIR UDDIN AHMED: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) the number of telephone exchange set up in the rural areas of all the districts of West Bengal;

(b) whether more telephone exchanges are to be set up in the State; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps that have been taken to improve the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN) : (a) Sir, 1066 telephone exchanges have been set up in rural areas of all the districts of West Bengal.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) 26 telephone exchanges are planned to be set up in 9 districts of West Bengal. Details are given in the enclosed statement (*See* below). Following steps have been taken to improve rural connectivity:—

(i) Opening of new exchanges where techno-economic viability is there.

(ii) Providing WLL to rural populace progressively by installing at least one number of BTS in each SDCA.

(iii) Details of new exchange planned is given in Annexure.

(iv) VPT holders have been asked to book their faults in the office of JTO Incharge of concerned Telephone Exchange.

(v) Testing of VPTs is being carried out daily from exchanges to identify the faulty VPT.

(vi) Meter readings are checked fortnightly and low meter reading is taken as an indication of the system not performing properly.

(vii) VPTs provided on MARR technology have been decided to be replaced mainly by WLL technology, as these were not performing satisfactorily.

(viii) The WLL telephones have been provided with a rechargeable battery back up of 2 hrs. Subscribers are facing difficulty in charging the battery back up adequately because of erratic and prolonged power cuts prevailing in rural areas. There is a proposal to augment the battery capacity.

(ix) The performance of VPTs provided is monitored regularly.

(x) Proposal for awarding post warranty annual maintenance contract for providing maintenance support is in process.

Statement

District-wise list of Telephone Exchanges to be set up in West Bengal

Sl. No.	Name of District	No. of telephone exchanges to be set up
1.	Murshidabad	02
2.	Cooch Behar	06
3.	Nadia	04
4.	Malda	01
5.	Midnapore	04
6.	Howrah	04
7.	Hooghly	01
8.	24 Parganas (North)	02
9.	24 Parganas (South)	02
	TOTAL :	26

Constitution of Telephone Advisory Committees at Circle Level

†214. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry has been in receipt of suggestions from the Representatives (M.Ps.) in regard to constituting Telephone Advisory Committees at circle level throughout the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by the Ministry in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Implementation of Revised Tariff

215. SHRI MURLI DEORA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.